

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 /056 W
-----240745 023512 /14

R 240715Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5974

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0178

E.O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: PINR, BE
SUBJECT: NEW DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BELGIAN FOREIGN OFFICE

1. CLAUDE RUELLE, BELGIAN AMBASSADOR TO BURUNDI SINCE 1973, LEFT BUJUMBURA FEB 24 TO ASSUME POST AS DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY. RUELLE, WHO IS DIVORCED WITH GROWN CHILDREN, HAS HAD PREVIOUS SERVICE IN THE BELGIAN CONGO, ZAIRE, AND SEVERAL LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. BEFORE COMING TO BURUNDI, HE WAS FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS AT THE BELGIAN EMBASSY IN BONN, APPARENTLY AS COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR. BESIDES FRENCH, RUELLE SPEAKS PASSABLE SPANISH AND GERMAN, AND A MODICUM OF ENGLISH. HIS FLEMISH IS USABLE, BUT LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED IN NORMAL CONVERSATION, AND HE PLANS INTENSIVE MORNING COURSES AT THE MINISTRY. HE IS A MODERATE ON THE LINGUISTIC PROBLEM, WHO ACCEPTS THE NEED FOR ALL BELGIAN DIPLOMATS TO BE APPROXIMATELY BILINGUAL.

2. RUELLE IS CONSERVATIVE IN HIS POLITICS, PROBABLY LEANING TO THE LIBERAL PARTY, SINCE HE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE MUCH OF A PRACTICING CATHOLIC. HE IS BASICALLY DISTRUSTFUL OF THE USSR, CHINA, AND ALL OTHER COMMUNIST STATES, ALTHOUGH HE MAINTAINS SUPERFICIALLY GOOD RELATIONS WITH THEIR ENVOYS. WHILE NOT AT ALL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF MOST AFRICAN COUNTRIES (AND MANY OTHER LDC'S), HE BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT FOR THE WEST TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THEM, TO GIVE
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CONSIDERABLE AID, AND TO SHOW GENERAL SYMPATHY FOR THEIR ASPIRATIONS. HE EXUDES STRONG FEELINGS OF SOLIDARITY WITH EUROPEAN COMMUNITY COUNTRIES AND THE U.S. AND IS A FIRM BELIEVER IN NATO. HE HAS HAD RELATIVELY LITTLE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, IN INTRA-EUROPEAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND POLITICAL-MILITARY ACTIVITY. THUS, WHILE HIS OUTLOOK AND INSTINCTS ARE ALL HIGHLY COMPATIBLE WITH U.S. INTERESTS, HE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO USE HIS

FIRST MONTHS TO GAIN SOPHISTICATION IN MANY COMPLEX ISSUES.

3. AMBASSADOR RUELE IS A POLISHED DIPLOMAT IN THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SENSE, OSTENSIBLY FRIENDLY AND OUTGOING. NONETHELESS, HE JEALOUSLY GUARDS HIS PRIVATE LIFE AND FREE TIME, AND TRIES TO LIMIT HIS FORMAL ENTERTAINMENT COMMITMENTS. HE MUCH PREFERS LUNCHEON TO DINNER ENGAGEMENTS, HIS AGE (MID-FIFTIES) AND OVER-WEIGHT HAVE LED TO SOME PHYSICAL PROBLEMS (OCCASIONAL GOUT, MUSCLE DEBILITIES IN BACK AND LEGS, AND PERHAPS DIGESTIVE ILLS), BUT HE ENJOYS WATER SKI AND MOUNTAIN SKI EXCURSIONS TO VARY HIS OTHERWISE FAIRLY SEDENTARY LIFE. HE WILL BE VERY PLEASE TO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS.
MARK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUJUMB00178
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED PER 77 BUJUMBURA 268
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770063-1144
Format: TEL
From: BUJUMBURA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770214/aaaaampg.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3073c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3244921
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BELGIAN FOREIGN OFFICE
TAGS: PINR, BE, (RUELLE, CLAUDE)
To: BRUSSELS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3073c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009